

## POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

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perhaps in Ndulu. In Ngendo the Men's Club had taken over the 345  
rocks just behind the headman's household for its meeting-place, 178  
but the meetings were only occasional and there was no common  
meal.

*The Village Plan*

To speak of the plan of an Umbundu village may seem a con- 361  
tradiction in terms, so haphazard seems the relation of houses,  
gardens, &c., to each other. Some houses are circular, but the [342]  
majority are more nearly rectangular in shape. There is a palisade [417]  
of hardwood sticks surrounding all the village except that side of  
the headman's household which is adjacent to the rocks used  
for a club-house. The headman had not bothered to keep up his  
own part of the fence since his only garden was a small tobacco  
plot fenced in by itself. The village is itself divided up by the 621  
palisades which shut off one compound from another, each com- 343  
pound containing the houses of from one to three households.  
Between the palisades are paths which lead on to the dancing floor [363]  
and out of the village. In the village of Sekulu Sikilile there were  
twenty-five households with thirty-two houses in all. Each house  
(*onjo*) had its own granary (*osila*), and small chicken-coop built  
on stilts, and of all the houses only six had separate kitchens  
(*ocimo*). Nearly every household had separate pens for the pigs,  
goats, and sheep for the night. At one side of the headman's  
compound there was a common corral for the nine cattle which  
the villagers owned. Only the headman had a spirit-hut (*etambo*), [346]  
used also for a storehouse, for entertaining a guest, and for his own  
bedroom should he sleep apart from his wives. Within the several 621  
compounds were small gardens of tobacco and of maize and beans, 244  
and just outside the village were two separate tobacco gardens.  
Just a few paces to the west was a small patch of wheat belonging  
to a man in the smallest ward. There was one household of two  
houses quite outside the palisades appropriately belonging to a  
man named *Kalika* (meaning 'Being-alone'). The water-holes [312]  
and pounding rocks where meal was ground were between the [252]  
several units of the village and were used in common. The  
fields were off to the east at from thirty minutes' to an hour's [241]  
walk. The two smaller wards of Ciyanda and Kanjengo were so  
small that they were like two or three compounds by themselves. 621  
The former had six households with eight houses, and the latter

PLATE VI

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Photo. R. S. Webb

a. Harvesting peanuts (Bailundu)

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Photo. M. W. Smith

a. Road workers

[Facing p 49]

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When a field is wearing out, the corn growing shorter and bearing fewer ears to the stalk, (1) the woman makes a final planting of corn, sticking cuttings of manioc between the rows. Most of these cuttings take root and grow. It takes two or three years for the tubers of this plant to mature in an old field, but in some parts of the country where manioc is set in new land it matures within a year. The leaves of the plant are used as a vegetable with corn-meal, and manioc meal is used as a basic substitute when corn is short.

#### *The onaka or river-garden*

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In August a woman plants her *onaka*, near a stream in the alluvial soil, or in some river bed. Here she plants corn which will be ready for eating during the January period of food shortage, as well as cabbage and other vegetables.

#### *Organisation of labour*

[462]

Formerly men did the heavier work of clearing new fields, although, as has been noted above, since the introduction of wage labour much of the work is left to the women. Men may also have their own fields, the produce of which is sold to provide ready cash to clothe the family, pay taxes etc. The women's fields are intended to feed the family. Children help their parents in the fields, but also have their own plots. Gardens are made by each household, i.e. by each wife where there are a number of wives. Neighbours often co-operate during the harvesting period, after which beer is supplied by the owner of the field which has been harvested. (2)

[476]

#### *HUNTING* (3)

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[463]

[468]

Most men and boys hunt, and women and children may help in burning the grass and driving the game during the annual communal fire-hunts. But the professional hunter or *ukongo* is a recognised specialist, qualified by specific training and dependent on his knowledge of hunting magic and ritual for his success. A boy becomes a *ukongo* by an apprenticeship of about two years to an older hunter. This period culminates in a ceremony of inauguration, which may be attended by all the villagers but at which only the professional hunters dance. Several *ukongo* provide game, which is cooked for the feast; the dancing commences but the novice remains still and silent until he feels the "spirit of the head"; he then rises and distributes game to the villagers. Blood from the animals killed is sprinkled over his weapons, which have been made by the *ukongo* who has trained him. From now on his daily life is subject to certain ritual prohibitions: he must not sleep with his wife on the night before going on a hunt, special food and cooking-pots must be used for him, etc.

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A professional hunter usually works alone, using bows and arrows,

(1) There is no information concerning the length of the farming-cycle.

(2) Childs, personal communication.

(3) See Hensby, *Bantu Studies*, 1934, and Oviakanda, 1934, pp. 140-5; Cushman, 1944, pp. 113-20.

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*Olungunga* is not a sweet manioc, so is not eaten raw. The roots are placed to soak in a stream for three or four days before they are roasted on a fire, after which they may be eaten with impunity. As an alternative the roots may be dried in the sun; they are then pounded into meal which is scattered into boiling water so that a mush is formed. The Umbundu name for this preparation is *ipula riutombo*, meaning "mush of manioc." The leaves of *olungunga* are not soaked in water; on the contrary, they may be cooked as soon as they are gathered, but they must not be eaten when warm. There is no danger in eating them after they have been boiled and have been allowed to become cold. The leaves are served with salt or fat. [252] [263]

All the manioc, with the exception of *olungunga*, is sweet. *Kandona* has roots which may be eaten uncooked, but both leaves and roots are sometimes cooked in water. Other varieties of manioc known as *otetu*, *elemba*, and *esela* are eaten in the same way as *kandona*. Manioc is in use all the year, but the greatest quantity is consumed in November and December, a period when the growing corn is not ripe and the storage supplies have dwindled. [221]

Sweet potatoes are plentiful all the year with the exception of the months of November and December. They are placed in the pot, without removal of the skin, and boiled for a period of twenty or thirty minutes. They are taken out, peeled, and eaten. European potatoes are sometimes peeled and made into a mush. The variety of garden produce naturally depends on proximity to a trading post, a mission, or some other European settlement. [177]

In propagating manioc a stem is cut off from the parent plant which is about three feet high; but probably two or three years pass before the tubers are considered large enough for use. Sweet potatoes are planted in January, but there is very little of this food available in February and March. Toward the end of March or early in April a few potatoes may be ready for consumption. 244 • [221]

Peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*, Leguminosae) are planted in October by women who prepare patches of ground which are drilled with holes one inch deep and eight inches apart. One nut is placed in each hole after the shell has been removed. Above the ground small leaves appear. After the flower-stalk withers it has the peculiarity of elongating and bending down. In this way the young pod is forced underground, and the seeds mature a little way below the surface.

Some natives employ irrigation by leading small channels of water from a hillside stream to a garden containing maize and 312

312 bananas, but one could not say that irrigation is generally practised, even when circumstances permit.

245 The papaya and the banana are increasingly cultivated, but they are by no means generally distributed. Here and there I  
[249] have seen a little sugar-cane cultivated by natives for their own use. Near the main railway natives may be seen selling their  
[244] products, which include cabbages and tomatoes. Some natives are today planting the guava tree which yields sweet palatable fruits. The fruits *olosis* are collected from the *usis* tree. When ripe, the fruit is yellow, round, and about two inches in diameter. These fruits are gathered in September, and the kernels, which are about the size of walnuts, are eaten uncooked. No fruits are collected for storage. *Olombula* fruits ripen in October, when they are eaten raw.

264 Each wife sends the food which she has cooked in her own kitchen to the *onjongo* ("council house"). After carrying the food to this house of assembly, where the men meet each evening, the women return to their houses to eat alone, or with the young children.

343 When there is a plurality of wives each has her own house and  
252 kitchen. Ngonga states that separate kitchens built outside the  
[998] living houses are becoming more rare. The poor have their kitchens in the living room because they cannot provide separate structures for living and cooking.

264 The first meal is taken between five and six o'clock in the morning,  
262 the most usual food being meal sprinkled on boiling water to form  
252 a paste which is eaten with sweet potatoes. A mush of beans is eaten at night; generally there is no meal at midday. Three pounds of cooked beans are eaten by a person for one meal. Over the cooking pots leaves are placed to keep in the steam, especially when the pot contains sweet potatoes. I have made a meal from the sticky, gluey paste which results from sprinkling meal on boiling water. The chief objection to this food is the unpleasant quantity of grit in the meal, owing to the fact that it is pounded on the rocks. Manioc and sugar-cane are chewed at irregular intervals of the day.

262 The amount of meat consumed by the Ovimbundu is small in comparison with the quantity of vegetable food used. This adoption of diet of a particular kind is largely a matter of habit, and there is no good reason why meat should not form a larger proportion of the food supply. The Ovimbundu do not kill their cattle for food though they will eat the meat of oxen which have died from natural causes.

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Not only the carpenter, but almost every Ocimbundu man possesses an implement which may be readily adapted as ax or adze (Plate XIII, Fig. 2). The wooden shaft, from 50 to 70 cm in length, terminates in a narrow grip at one end, while the other end expands into a large oval knob into which a circular hole is bored. The strong iron blade, one of the main products of the local forge, can be removed. If the round tang of the blade is inserted so that the cutting edge is in the same plane as the shaft, the implement is an ax. On the contrary, insertion so that the cutting edge is at right angles to the shaft converts the implement into an adze. When placed over the shoulder this implement is used for carrying utensils in a fiber bag (Plate XXVIII, Fig. 1). 412  
[452]

Gourds are of three main kinds, which may be found growing on the ground or resting on the roofs of houses at the ends of the climbing stems that bear them. *Ombenge* is a gourd which is narrow in the middle. It is often converted into a dipper for ladling liquids. The narrow neck is the handle, while a round hole is cut in the larger part so that the dipper can be filled with liquid. *Ongonjo* is round, or perhaps oval in form. There is a size used as a measure of capacity. *Ongonjo* can be used as a ladle by fixing it at the end of a stick. *Olakumbo* has a round body and a narrow hook-shaped neck; like the gourd *ombenge*, it is used as a ladle. 415  
[244]

Gourds are elaborately decorated with incised and burned designs (Plate XII, Figs. 1-6). Usually these patterns are geometrical, but human figures and animals are sometimes included. Decorated gourds from Bailundu, used for containing beer at a wedding, are among the best examples of their kind (Plate XII, Fig. 6). The owner of a decorated gourd takes great pains to repair a crack with rattan, which is threaded through holes bored in the edges of the fracture. A large gourd is sometimes carried in a native-made net of vegetable fiber. 531  
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## POTTERY

A large and varied collection of pottery has been acquired from the Ovimbundu, the Vachokue, and the Vasele. The shapes and styles are best indicated by the illustrations in Plate XIV, Figs. 1-5. 323  
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Among the Ovimbundu, only women make pots, which are inferior in workmanship to those of the Vachokue and the Vasele. At Elende, among the Ovimbundu, I was surprised to find a man making pottery. Further inquiry showed that he had learned his craft when young in the Vachokue country of eastern Angola. This man, whose work was not copied at all by Ovimbundu women, was regarded as a specialist whose products were in great demand. [462]